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ABSTRACT

Psychoanalysts and psychotherapists in general do not apprehend the data of their field in any strict literal sense. Rather, they prefigure psychopathological data at a precognitive level. This prefiguration employs one or more of the poetic tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. Each psychotherapy achieves its particular explanatory effect by a combination of certain modes of explanation (explanation by argument, emplotment, and ideological implication). Within each of these explanatory strategies lie four modes of articulation. For arguments there are the modes of formism, organicism, mechanism, and contextualism. For emplotment there are the archetypes of romance, tragedy, comedy, and satire. For ideological implication there are the tactics of anarchism, conservatism, radicalism, and liberalism. The use of these strategies by psychoanalytical, rational-emotive, behavioral, person-centered, paradoxical, and transactional therapists suggests that individual psychotherapies may be manifestations of a greater metapsychotherapy which is essentially poetic in nature. (Author/NRB)

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Toward a Metapsychotherapy Using a Model from Historical Criticism

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Abstract

This paper asserts that psychotherapists do not apprehend the data of psychopathology in any strict literal sense. Rather, they prefigure the field precritically using some combination of four poetic tropes (metaphor, metonomy, synecdoche and irony). It is further asserted that psychotherapists achieve their "explanatory effect" through the use of certain "explanatory stategies," summarized as explanation by formal argument, by emplotment and by ideological implication. This paper argues for a metapsychotherapy. It demonstrates how these concepts may be applied to psychoanalytic, analytical, transactional analytical, rational-emotive, behavior and person-centered therapies. Some practical implications arising from such a metapsychotherapy are outlined.

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This paper asserts that psychoanalysts and psychotherapists in general, in a manner similar to historians (White, 1973), do not apprehend the data of their field in any strict literal sense. Rather, it asserts that they prefigure psuchopathologiical data at a precognitive level, and that this prefiguration employs one or more of the poetic tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. It further asserts that each psychotherapy achieves its particular "explanatory effect" by a combination of certain modes of explanation: "Explanation by formal argument, explanation by emplotment and explanation by ideological implication" (White, p. x). Within each of these "explanatory strategies" lie four "modes of articulation": "For arguments there are the modes of Formism, Organicism, Mechanism and Contextualism; for emplotment there are the archetypes of Romance, Tragedy, Comedy and Satire; and for ideological implication there are the tactics of Anarchism, Conservatism Radicalism and Liberalism" (p. x). This paper outlines these concepts and shows how they may be used to demsonstrate that individual psychotherapies may be manifestations of a greater metapsychotherapy which is essentially poetic in nature.

Of the poetic tropes, metaphor is representational or symbolic. The

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analytical psychotherapists are powerfully influenced by this trope because they believe that "all products of the unconscious are symbolic" (Kaufmann, 1979, p. 97).

Metonymy functions reductively and is active whenever the part is presumed to stand for the whole. This trope influences the postulates of the psychoanalyst (Arlow, 1979), rational-emotive (Ellis, 1979) and behavior therapists (Chambliss & Goldstein, 1979). The first views the whole of personality as being reducible to the operation of basic drives; the second, to the operation of cognition; and the third to behavior.

Synecdoche is integrative and seeks to establishes a qualitative relationship between the part and the whole. The person-centered therapist (Meador & Rogers, 1979) prefigures psychopathology using this trope by assuming that the client's self-actualizing tendency represents and guarantees her overall worth.

Irony tacitly affirms "the negative of what is on the literal level affirmed positively, or the reverse" (White, 1973, p.37). This is the operative trope among paradoxical psychotherapists, who inspire in the client "second thoughts about the nature of things categorized or the inadequacy of the characterization itself" (p. 37).

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To produce "explanatory effect" the therapist may use the formistic, organicistic, mechanistic or contexualistic approaches. The formist attempts to isolate, categorize, and label that which it investigates. Transactional analysts (Dusay & Dusay, 1979) are formists insofar as they explain psychopathology by identifying and labelling various personality "structures": e.g., "adult," "child" and " parent."

The organicist relies on identifying some underlying telelogical process, guided by certain principles, which leads to a higher integration of the object-process being explained. Person-centered and analytical therapists explain in this manner, both viewing the psyche as moving in a purposive way toward some form of integrated self-actualization.

The mechanist searches for laws of causality and for the evidence to support these laws. The process is reductive. Both the behavior and rational-emotive therapists use this articulation as their mode of explanation. The former points to the laws of learning, the latter to the "law" that cognitions produce emotions

The contextualist follows threads of relationships in order to understand the significance of an event. This is the mode of articulation of the psychoanalyst who follows threads of images back to childhood to

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"explain" present functioning.

Explanations may be also represented as "modes of emplotment." Under this heading are the archetypes of romance, tragedy, comedy and satire. The romantic archetype envisions a stuggle between good and evil which leads to the triumph of good, and to a transcendence. Both person-centered and rational-emotive therapists are swayed by this archetype. The former sees the triumph of self-actualization over incongruence, the latter the triumph of rationality over irrationality.

The archetype of tragedy advises resignation to conditions, and the realization of "legitimate" limitations. This archetype characterizes both the behavior and rational-emotive therapies. The former recognizes the constraints of the environment, the latter the constraints necessary to maintain a "rational" viewpoint.

Comedy, representing the reconciliation of opposing forces leading to a temporary triumph, appears in both psychoanalytical and person-centered therapies. The former exlains growth as the resolution of conflicts (e.g., Oedipal), the latter as the reconciliation of parts of the personality with the whole.

Satire, the final emplotment archetype, views human consciousness as

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something which is ultimately inadequate for the travails of life. Satire appears to be absent from all psychotherapies with the exception of paradoxical psychotherapy which uses it for its ironic impact.

The final mode of explanation is that of ideological implication which encompasses the anarchistic, conservative, radical and liberal viewpoints. The anarchistic viewpoint hearkens back to a more primitive childlike state, which it idolizes. It postulates the need for individualism and the development of unrealized potential. Almost any therapy with an existential "slant" may be viewed as anarchistic. Person-centered therapy, for example, tries to free the individual from self-incorporated, foreign constraints. It values highly the undeveloped potential of the person.

The conservative viewpoint holds that the present state of functioning is generally satisfactory. Any changes deemed necessary should be in the form of modifications to existing structures. This characterizes the approach of the behavior therapist, who usually works for change within a given behavioral environment. Paradoxical therapists are likely to affect a conservative viewpoint for its ironic effect.

The radical viewpoint demands an immediate revolution leading to an

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immediate utopia. Rational-emotive therapy seems to hold such expectations of its clients. Rational thoughts lead in some revolutionary fashion to emotional stability.

The final tactic of ideological implication is liberalism. This viewpoint is espoused by the psychoanalytical, analytical and person-centered therapists, insofar as they expect delayed improvement, and, insofar as they project the quintessinal event (self-knowledge and self-actualization) into some remote future.

It s clear that the basis for a poetic metapsychotherapy (after the model of White, 1973) exists. Fuller articulation of the poetic tropes and modes of explanation, together with a more detailed exposition of these and other psychotherapies, should lead to a substantive metapsychotherapy. Such a metapsychotherapy could be used to better map the relationships between therapies, to aid in the instruction of psychotherapy, and to guide productive client-therapist matchings (Berzins, 1977). Finally, it could help us more clearly understand the complex variety of translations of "literal" psychopathological data presented by the major storytellers of the psyche. This conundrum, as it related to psychoanalysis, was articulated by Freud (Freud, 1949, pp. 53-54).

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